2019 Election and Strengthening Political Identity:
The Importance of the Role of Nu & Muhammadiah in Maintaining Quality Democracy

Syafhendry and Setyo Utomo

Departement of Government Science, Universitas Islam Riau, Pekanbaru, Indonesia

Abstract: Post-reformation, the 2019 election was felt as the most present election tension among the community, compared to the previous elections since the 1999 general election. The use of identity politics by attracting religious sentiments into the political realm was truly massive and almost split the affiliated communities in the two big poles of sympathizers and supporters of two vice presidential presidential candidates Joko Widodo-Ma'ruf Amin vs. Prabowo Subianto-Sandiaga Uno. Islam as the majority religion in Indonesia, greatly determines the future of democracy in Indonesia. The success of the implementation of post-reform democracy which is driven by Islam, must be maintained and continued. NU and Muhammadiah as representations of the two largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia are required to provide enlightenment to build moderate community thinking, to strengthen the building and quality of democracy. The 2019 presidential election is expected to be a learning to prepare a quality democracy far from the use of identity politics.

1 INTRODUCTION

After the wave of reform 98 has placed Indonesia as an ideal model of democracy, for world countries including the Islamic State in the Middle East. After the fall of the Suharto regime, Indonesia has transformed into a stable democratic country and has experienced significant economic growth. As a nation with a pluralistic society with a majority of Muslims, Indonesia is able to present democracy as an ideal system in the practice of nationhood. This has also shifted the western view of the Islamic world which initially doubted democracy could grow in Islamic countries. Indonesian Islam has promoted the world, that Islam and democracy can compare well, without having to contradict the two. The success of the democratic process in Indonesia is marked by the running of elections that are safe, peaceful, run democratic without being accompanied by conflict and war. Indonesia's success in building the democratization process brings appreciation and praise from world leaders. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called Indonesia an example of democracy for the Muslim world. While giving a speech at the State Palace, even Clinton said "Indonesia is a model of how Islam, democracy, modernity and women's rights can grow together and harmonize in a country". Not to forget, President Obama in his

last address at the UN General Assembly (Tuesday, 20/09/2016) praised Indonesian democracy as a good example for the model of world democracy. Obama stated "Indonesia has succeeded in making the people the holders of sovereignty". This is in line with the rise of the democratic movement that is widespread in most Islamic countries in the Middle East (Arya Fernandez, 2019).

But efforts to advance and maintain the democratization process go well in countries with heterogeneous societies are not easy and without obstacles. The 2019 election shows, Indonesia has just entered a test that is quite crucial in its democratic journey. Where the issue of SARA (ethnicity, religion, race and between groups) really surfaced and became a wild ball to bring down opponents, in order to win the election. As a country whose people have just learned about democracy, they have not fully realized that the issue of SARA is actually a form of black campaign that is intentionally created by political forces to win the contestaton is very risky for the integrity of this nation.

The phenomenon or problem in this study is the strengthening use of religious sentiment in the 2019 presidential election amidst a pluralistic society, which can be an entry point for radical thinking that

can threaten the future of democracy in Indonesia. The important role of NU and Muhammadiah as the largest Islamic community organization in Indonesia is here, so that people are not trapped in the use of identity politics in democratic practices in Indonesia.

Be advised that papers in a technically unsuitable form will be returned for retyping. After returned the manuscript must be appropriately modified.

2 METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study research design. According to Creswell (2014: 14) case studies are investigative designs found in many fields, especially evaluations, where researchers develop in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more people. Meanwhile, according to Yin (2018), case studies are empirical methods that investigate contemporary phenomena ("cases") in depth and in real world contexts, especially when, and may not be clear. In the context of this research, the focus of this study is to analyze the strengthening of identity politics in the 2019 elections in Indonesia, especially the strengthening of identity politics in the 2019 presidential election in Indonesia. This is due to the strengthening use of religious sentiment by sympathizers and supporters of two pairs of presidential candidates in the 2019 presidential election. This condition can be a serious threat to the future of democracy in Indonesia.

Data collection in this study comes from documentation and archival records such as books, research journals, reports, survey data, and articles in mass media and online media. The power of data collection techniques according to Yin (2018) is stable, inconspicuous, specific, and broad. Data collected from various sources are then analyzed using approaches and theories that are relevant to research and produce research conclusions.

3 THE MASS OF THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY

During the implementation of the campaign period lasting 8 months, the public was more served by campaigns that manipulated racial issues, identity politics, fake news content and speeches of hatred that were far from presenting substantive issues. This condition is aggravated by the massive campaign mobility on social media, by presenting SARA issues and containing hate speech (Pukapol UI, 2019 "Managing

Political Identity: Counter-Narrative Strategy Against Politicization of Identity Politics in 2019 Election Through the Involvement of Candidate Campaign Teams") . Public was carried away by being trapped in mutual support actions due to the strengthening of sensitive issues made by the buzzers by loading content with religious sentiment. The use of religious issues to attack the presidential candidates is very easy to find, both on social media, even in religious lectures which mention the Jokowi regime as anti-Islam, criminalizing the ulama to pro against China. The National Fatwa Guards Movement (GNPF Ulama) and the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), have become Islamic forces that often display religious issues in the public sphere. The political elite seems unable to control themselves, by drawing on the issue of SARA (ethnicity, religion, race and between groups) to the political vortex. Even black campaigns that tend to attack the personal self of each candidate are unavoidable. This can be seen from the narratives and movements that were built by the team and sympathizers of the two pairs of candidates to attack each other with the aim of bringing down the opponent, while also intending to gain sympathy and support from the community. Even splits appear to be intensified through or by users of social media to sow disputes and spread disinformation that can lead to misunderstandings in the community. This further adds to the complexity of the problem, this condition is increasingly difficult to eliminate in the near future, because the use of social media is very high by the community.

Since the elections in 1999, the 2019 elections have been felt to be the most extreme resulting in polarization and almost dividing society. Many hope that post-election tensions will decrease, but it seems that it is not as simple as what is desired. Various actions and protests continued to color after the election. The siege of the Bawaslu office and the refusal of the Constitutional Court's ruling on the results of the presidential election accompanied by the tendency to reject election results by sympathizers and mass supporters of the presidential candidate pair showed that the 2019 election had given rise to serious problems that could give rise to potential structural and horizontal conflicts.

The new thesis was discovered by Mietzner and Muhtadi (2018) in (Arya Fernandez, 2019) stating that the phenomenon of strengthening conservatism among voters after the action movement 212 by the National Movement Guards Fatwa Council of Indonesian Ulema (GNPF MUI) figures. Before the actions of 212 conservatism among Muslim voters experienced deterioration, in the period 2010 to 2016. In different publications, Mietzner, Muhtadi and Halida

(2018) explained that mass mobilization in action 212 affected an increase in support for the agenda of the Islamic political agenda. The LSI survey findings, as quoted by Mietzer, et al., Also showed an increase in the average rejection of non-Muslims in filling political positions from 42.3% in 2016 to 49.6% in 2017. The mobilization of action 212 was also encouraged because previously there were voter rejections against non-Muslims. Muslims in politics and refusal to co-exist with people of different faiths.

Noise in elections, both presidential elections and regional elections is not a new phenomenon in a democratic event both in Indonesia and in western countries. Efforts to attract religious sentiments, racial sentiments, tribes to the political territory are often practiced by politicians and elites. So that it requires maturity and political awareness for the community, not to be easily trapped in issues that are not substantive. In the noise of democracy there are gaps in the creation of seeds of conflict and excessive fanaticism. Therefore, psychologically, democracy requires people who are sufficiently educated, open minded, tolerant, able to accept differences, and can show empathy for others. Efforts to burn racial sentiments to an extreme stage have occurred in political history that took place in Germany. What happened in Germany in the mid-1930s is an example of the danger of fanaticism. At that time, their economy was knocked down by the financial crisis in Europe and America. Plus, Germany had just lost in World War I. Millions of people were unemployed, poor, hungry and frustrated. In such conditions Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party won elections. German Chancellor Hitler revived fascism and killed democracy. Hitler, according to Professor of University of Indonesia Psychology HamdiMuluk, gained a single loyalty in the country by manipulating the fears of the German people. Chancellor also conquered Poland so that World War II broke out. From here shows that blind fanaticism can drown common sense (Arya Fernandez, 2019)

Identity politics is part of an attempt to politicize the use of the identity of a collective group of feelings of 'confusion' which are the main basis for bonding group ties and collectivity. Identity here can take the form of ethnicity, race, religion, class and others. This primordial bond is then politicized in such a way by interest groups for certain purposes, including for political purposes. Puritanism or the teachings of purity or orthodoxy also play a major role in producing and distributing the idea of 'goodness' towards members on the one hand, while on the other hand closing the reasoning of resistance or critical members of certain identity groups. Identity politics, according to (Abdillah, Ubed, 2002) is a politics whose main focus

is study and its problems regarding differences based on physical body assumptions, political ethnicity or primordialism, and religious, belief, or language conflicts.

Blind fanaticism can flourish in a democratic political climate such as in the 2019 general election. Fanatics are vulnerable to cognitive bias. Sometimes fanatics can no longer accept the truth from other groups. Zealots only believe that only the group is right. In some conditions, the feeling of love for the group itself which encourages a person to fight for his group is something normal and natural. In a political partisan attitude that encourages loyalty and willingness of people to volunteer for parties is sometimes needed. But what was alarming was, when religious-based populism became increasingly violent. While politicians continue to be engrossed in playing identities, fan voters to stay hot. Therefore, to be a critical voter, everyone must introspect to examine fanaticism within themselves. Only in that way can we save our democracy.

4 NU & MUHAMMADIAH MUST DARE TO AGENCY

Islam as the majority religion in Indonesia must realize that the challenges of nationality in this era of modernization are increasingly complex and extreme. The atmosphere of information disclosure through the proliferation of information technology that can be accessed by each individual community can have a serious impact on unity in the community. Islam as a religion that brings the message of rahmatanlil'alamin (mercy to all nature), must be able to provide a real solution for every challenge and dynamic that occurs in the era of modern democracy.So that the presence of Islam is truly able to provide calm and peace not only for individuals, but for the collective life of nation and state. Islamic principles and values, which humanize humans, are expected to bring enlightenment and maturity to society in democracy.

In many sources and teachings, Islam teaches the practice of democracy in the life of nation and state, even the practice of democracy itself has been going on since the era of the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad, until the reign of khulafaurrasyidin. The consultative model during the khulafaurrasyidin is a form of democratic spirit known as ahihalliwal'aqdi which has the function of electing the head of state or government through a process of deliberation and election. Here is very clear in the early days of Islamic rule that has been applied in the state system (Farih, 2016; Jati, 2013). According to experts in

contemporary Islamic thought democracy must provide the same space and place for all groups in society. The value of justice, equality must be upheld together. Like the opinion of Abdurrahman Wahid and Nurcholis Madjid which states that democracy contains two values, namely the value that is fundamental and that is derivative. According to Abdurrahman Wahid, the main values of democracy are freedom, equality, deliberation and justice. Freedom means individual freedom before state power and a balance between the individual rights of citizens and the collective rights of society. Nurcholish Majid, as quoted by Nasaruddin, said that a country is called democratic to the extent that the state guarantees human rights, among others: freedom of expression, freedom of association and assembly. Because democracy rejects detectiveism, feudalism and authoritarianism. In a democratic country, the relationship between the authorities and the people is not a power relationship but based on laws which uphold human rights(Jurdi, 2011; Muhammadiyah, 1995).

NahdlatulUlama (NU) and Muhammadiah as spread Islamic organizations in Indonesia that have moderate understanding, are increasingly being demanded for their active participation in guarding the journey of democratization in Indonesia. The values and democratic practices that have been taught by NU figures, Muhammadiah, such as Abdurrahman Wahid (4th Republic of Indonesia president) and BuyaSyafi'IMa'arif (former General Chair of PP Muhammadiah) who continue to be consistent in guarding dignified democracy need to be continued by the next generation. It is inevitable for activists, individuals and Islamic civil society groups in NU and Muhammadiyah, to make the same effort to contribute to enlighten the community by promoting the ideas of dignified democracy among Muslims and maintaining the independence of civil society as the main pillar for maintaining and carrying out the process quality democratization, far from the issue of SARA and the politicization of identity politics. At the same time the creation of critical groups is also very necessary to create control and balance to control the running of government by the power of society.

5 THE ROLE OF ISLAM IN PROMOTING DEMOCRATIZATION IN INDONESIA

In the long journey of this nation, Islam as the majority religion has played an important role in push-

ing the democratization process in Indonesia. The existence of NU and Muhammadiyah as the largest Islamic organization is undoubtedly in an effort to strengthen the building of civil society in Indonesia. To strengthen the democratization process in Indonesia, NU and Muhammadiyah are required to be brave enough to put on a body and continue to be consistent in continuing the function of political education towards their followers and the general public, to carry out a dignified democratic process. The success of NU and Muhammadiah in guarding the process of political transition after the fall of the New Order under Suharto's authoritarian government to a democratic system of government must be the spirit, that the two largest Islamic community organizations are always awaited to play a role in overseeing the democratization process in this democratic government. The presence of Gusdur (Abdurrahman Wahid) as Chair of the PBNU and AmienRais who served as chairman of the PP. Muhammadiyah at that time with the 98 student movement had increased public awareness in demanding the administration of democratic governance. So that the process of transition of power at that time from totalitarian rule under the Soeharto regime to democratic reform government could run smoothly(Muhammadiyah, 2015; Olsan et al., 2003).

After the fall of Soeharto, efforts to strengthen democratization also continued when Gusdur entered the government, where in the 1999 election Gusdur was elected as President and AmienRais sat as chairman of the Republic of Indonesia MPR. Gusdur's policy to revoke the dual function of the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) that returned the military to the function of national defense was as an entry point and basic foundation to strengthen the democratization process in the practice of the life of the nation and state. With the return of military power to the function of national defense, civil society groups regained their role in voicing and participating in determining State policy. Even since reformation, various figures and civil society groups have formed political parties, as a sign of the presence of a democratization room, where every community has the same political rights to vote and be elected, both in the executive and legislative branches. The freedom to establish a political party had never happened before under the rule of the new order which had been in power for 32 years, because the existence of political parties was restricted and controlled by the State, namely only 3 political parties were permitted namely, PPP, PDI and GolonganKarya all under control of the Suharto regime.

From the above conditions, it shows the great commitment of Islamic leaders to realize democratization efforts that are actually carried out in the sys-

tem of government in the reform era. Even Gusdur's efforts as president of Indonesia at that time to realize democratization in Indonesia had to be paid dearly because Gusdur had to lose his power as President of the Republic of Indonesia because of the democratization process that emphasized freedom in politics. Political power in parliament at that time succeeded in carrying out political propaganda which led to the overthrow of Abdurrahman Wahid from the seat of the President of the Republic of Indonesia even though in an unconstitutional manner. Even though Gusdur had to step down to lose its power as president, the democratization process in Indonesia continued until now, even making significant progress in the process of nation and state. So from here Islamic figures such as Gusdur, NurkholisMadjid, BuyaSyafi'iMa'arif can be said to be reformers in efforts to democratize the political system and the government system in Indonesia.

The ideas of democratization that have been built by Islamic reformist figures such as Gusdur, NurcholisMadjid on young activists from the two largest Islamic organizations have led to a strong movement for the continuation of the democratization process in the next generation. Young Islamic activists continue what has been pioneered by reformists in building Islamic legitimacy over democratic ideas, but in the format of new social movements that are in line with a more moderate contemporary context. namely social movements that no longer emphasize the struggle for identity politics, but emphasize diverse identities. It no longer emphasizes the interests of organized large groups, such as political parties, but the interests and rights of citizens are no longer dependent on state support, but rely on the independence and autonomy of civil society.

6 CONCLUSION

The future of democracy in Indonesia will be largely determined by the efforts of Muslims in developing and maintaining democratic consolidation both at the level of awareness and practice of democracy on two levels: the state and society. NU and Muhammadiah as the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia are required to give their role in seeking dignified democracy, fostering inclusive and moderate attitudes among diverse societies.

REFERENCES

Abdillah, Ubed (2002). *Politics of Ethnic Identity: Struggling Signs without Identity.* Magelang: Indonesian Foundation.

Arya Fernandez (2019). *Politics of Identity in the 2019 Election: Projections and Effectiveness.* Jakarta: CSIS ELECTION SERIES.

Farih, A. (2016). Nahdlatul ulama (nu) dan kontribusinya dalam memperjuangkan kemerdekaan dan mempertahankan negara kesatuan republik indonesia (nkri). *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan*, 24(2):251–284.

Jati, W. R. (2013). Ulama dan pesantren dalam dinamika politik dan kultur nahdlatul ulama. *ULUL ALBAB Jurnal Studi Islam*, 13(1):95–111.

Jurdi, S. (2011). Muhammadiyah dalam dinamika politik indonesia 1966-2006.

Muhammadiyah, P. P. (1995). *Berita Resmi Muhammadiyah.* June.

Muhammadiyah, P. P. (2015). Tanfidz keputusan muktamar muhammadiyah ke 47. *Berita Resmi Muhammadiyah: Yogyakarta.*

Olsan, T., Forbes, R. A., MacWilliams, G., Norwood, W. S., Reifsteck, M. A., Trosin, B., and Weber, M. M. (2003). Strengthening nurses' political identity through service learning partnerships in education. *JOURNAL-NEW YORK STATE NURSES ASSOCIATION*, 34(2):16–21.

Pukapol UI (2019).

Umar, Nasaruddin. Demokrasi dan musyawarah: Sebuah kajian analitis. *Komunikasi Perguruan Tinggi Islam*, V(12002):36.